





IREX/ASSISTANCE TO RUSSIAN ORPHANS (ARO) PROGRAM



ARO Support Services Strive to Prevent Second-Generation Abandonment

When Alina* learned she was expecting a second child, she believed the news left her with no choice. Already struggling to raise a nine-month-old son on her own, Alina felt unprepared to care for two infants and decided to place one of her children in the Novosibirsk orphanage system, where she knew the baby would be clothed and fed. She would be putting the child in familiar hands – she herself had aged out of the orphanage system only a few years before.

Unfortunately, stories like Alina's are all too common among young mothers who have aged out of state care. After growing up inside institutions, 16-18 year-olds leaving the system are often unprepared to provide for themselves, let alone a newborn. While Russian law guarantees young people housing after leaving the orphanage, economic constraints often prevent this right from being realized. Lacking healthy support networks, many young people leaving orphanages fail to make the transition to independence successfully. Though reliable statistics on the prevalence of "second-generation orphans" are unavailable, the children of parents who grew up in state care often wind up in orphanages themselves, the Russian newspaper *Moskovsky Komsomolets* reported in July.**

Summary:

In August, ARO conducted seminars in Novosibirsk on child abandonment prevention and rehabilitation and crisis intervention services for families at risk, as well as a workshop on independent living skills programs for children aging out of state care. Child welfare professionals from Novosibirsk also travelled to Tomsk region to observe functioning foster care support services set up by ARO.

The National Foundation for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NFPCC), IREX's main implementing partner on the ARO program, teamed with the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation and the Federal Education Agency to conduct a seminar on programs promoting family forms of care for orphaned and abandoned children. The Moscow-based seminar brought together 58 delegates from 33 regions of the Russian Federation.



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^{*}All names are changed to protect the privacy of ARO's clients.

^{** &}quot;In Russia a Dynasty of Abandonment Has Begun," Anastasia Kuzina, *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, July 3, 2008. <u>http://www.mk.ru/blogs/MK/2008/07/03/russia/360498/</u>.

The support program at Orphanage #6 helps single mothers find temporary housing and navigate the complex system of social welfare benefits in Russia, as well as informing mothers of their legal rights and teaching parenting skills. However, the moral support provided to single mothers by the new service may be the most important kind of assistance. In the past, orphanage staff sometimes reinforced young mothers' perceptions that they were unfit to parent and pressured them to surrender their children into state care. In contrast, Orphanage #6's new program strives to increase feelings of attachment between mother and child and boost single mothers' self-confidence as parents.

Alina will soon give birth, and with help from Orphanage #6's support service, she has developed a plan to raise both the newborn and her older son. The road ahead will not be easy, but Alina now has a renewed commitment to keep her family together, and somewhere to turn to for support.

Discussing Community Integration and Social Adaptation of Older Orphans in Novosibirsk

On August 20-21, 15 representatives of orphanages and educational institutions gathered in Novosibirsk for a three-session seminar entitled "Social-Psychological Adaptation for Orphans Aging Out of State Care." The seminar provided case studies of successful community integration and social adaptation programs in various regions of Russia. Participants also received information about the legal status of orphans who have aged out of state care and specific legal issues related to programming for this target group.

Reinforcing Early Crisis Intervention and Rehabilitation Services for Families in Crisis in Novosibirsk

On August 19-22, approximately 20 directors and specialists from Novosibirsk organizations and local government departments conducting pilot projects to prevent child abandonment and provide case management for families at the early stages of crisis gathered at a seminar intended to reinforce their knowledge on the subject. NFPCC trainers provided instruction to further prepare attendees to begin full-

fledged work on projects to rehabilitate families in crisis in the Iskitimsky district of Novosibirsk.

Institutionalizing Services to Prevent Early Child Abandonment at Novosibirsk NGO SibMama

On August 11-13, approximately 17 employees from SibMama, a Novosibirsk NGO, and the Novosibirsk Department of Social Development attended a project seminar called "Developing Services to Prevent Early Child Abandonment at SibMama." Led by NFPCC staff, the seminar, which was funded by SibMama, aimed to help the NGO develop and institutionalize services to prevent the abandonment of newborns.

Developing Child Abandonment Prevention Projects in Leninsky District of Novosibirsk

On August 14-15, approximately 25 employees of Novosibirsk orphanages and child welfare institutions attended a seminar called "Developing Mechanisms to Introduce Child Abandonment Prevention Models in Leninsky District." NFPCC trainers provided methodological support to organizations developing child abandonment projects to be funded by the regional Children of Novosibirsk Region and municipal Children and the City initiatives.

Study Tours to Zyryansky Orphanage's Foster Care Support Center Continue in Tomsk

On August 7-8, 9 child welfare professionals from Novosibirsk orphanages traveled to the village of Zyryansky in Tomsk region, where support services for foster families have been successfully established and active. The visiting professionals learned techniques for recruiting, selecting, preparing, and monitoring foster families, as well as how to prepare children for the transition from orphanage life to foster care. The study tour was funded by the government of Novosibirsk region.



News from Our Partner: the National Foundation for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NFPCC)

Delegates from 33 Russian Regions Shared Experience in Implementing Family Care for Orphans at Moscow Seminar

On August 27-29, 58 delegates from 33 regions of the Russian Federation united in Moscow for the seminar "Experience Implementing Programs of Family Care for Orphaned and Abandoned Children in the Russian Federation." The Russian government is currently restructuring its child welfare system and aims to move orphaned and abandoned children out of institutions and into families; the term family care includes care by foster parents, legal guardianship, and adoption.

The seminar, jointly organized by the NFPCC, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, and the Federal Education Agency, brought together directors and specialists from regional and municipal guardianship organs and foster care support centers to discuss the implementation of family care programs. NFPCC President Marina Egorova and NFPCC experts Antonina Shepina, Aleksandr Spivak and Galina Trostanetskaya reviewed the basic elements of regional models and the legal frameworks for family care. Delegates also received methodological recommendations for developing regional family care projects. Following the seminar, the participants will submit their own projects to the All-Russian Competition for Innovative Models of Family Care for Orphaned and Abandoned Children.



Vladimir Kabanov, Director of the Ministry of Education and Science's Department of Government Policy on Family Care for Orphaned and Abandoned Children, addresses attendees at the Moscow seminar.

Early Intervention Improves Integration for Orphans with Disabilities, Saves Local Governments Money

Sasha* will soon turn three, marking the third year he has spent in a Krasnoyarsk "baby home," or specialized orphanage for infants and toddlers. After he was diagnosed with cerebral palsy, Sasha's biological parents surrendered him to state care, and the orphanage is the only home he has ever known. Like many very young Russian orphans with cerebral palsy, at first Sasha was mostly confined to his crib, able only to gaze at the ceiling above him. Staying in the same uncomfortable position day after day results in tensed muscles and can lead to secondary disabilities in children like Sasha, who cannot roll over or sit up independently. Meanwhile, the lack of social interaction and cognitive stimulation can have devastating effects, inhibiting brain development. Luckily, Sasha now has a brighter future, thanks to early intervention services provided by the National Foundation for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NFPCC). He now spends his waking hours in a special chair instead of a crib, which allows him to turn his head and grasp objects in his hands. A new world has opened up for him, and he is as curious about it as any other toddler.

Early intervention is a new type of assistance in Russia that the NFPCC is able to introduce in Siberia's Krasnoyarsk region with joint funding from USAID's Global Development Alliance program and the regional government. Early intervention targets children with disabilities aged 0-4 and creates a rehabilitation approach focused simultaneously on the psychological, pedagogical and therapeutic needs of each child. The approach also includes corrective measures to prevent or minimize the effects of serious disabilities and maximize the child's psychological, emotional and physical development and his or her integration into the community. The progress made as a result of early intervention also means that Sasha and his peers have greater chances of finding adoptive or foster families and more educational opportunities.



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At age four, children in the Russian orphanage system "graduate" from baby homes; based on doctors' recommendations, the children then move into standard orphanages, rehabilitative orphanages, or nursing homes for the "social protection" of disabled citizens. Standard and rehabilitative orphanages provide schooling for the children in their care, but nursing homes do not offer educational services.

The staff of two baby homes in Krasnoyarsk decided to implement early intervention techniques after visiting a leading institution in St. Petersburg where such programs are already in place. Upon their return, the administrations of both baby homes adopted new policies on positioning and feeding the young orphans in their care. Though in the past, caretakers sometimes tried to feed the children as quickly as possible, staff are now extending mealtimes, giving the toddlers much-needed attention and social interaction during the process. The two baby homes have also undertaken reforms to decrease the child-to-caretaker ratio and integrate children with and without disabilities to provide further opportunities for socialization.

The early intervention programs currently being implemented by the NFPCC in Krasnoyarsk region draw heavily on models developed under the USAIDfunded, IREX-administered Assistance to Russian Orphans (ARO) program. ARO's early intervention services have already won support in the Far Eastern region of Khabarovsk, where the local Department of Health expanded the ARO-designed services throughout the city in 2004. Using funds from the city budget, early intervention programs were replicated in five institutions aside from the ARO-supported pilot sites and as a result, the services are now available to all children with disabilities aged 0-4 years old in Khabarovsk. The results of this system, which has been fully functional since 2006, speak for themselves: the number of children with "normal" development has increased by 11.2%, and the number of children returned to their biological families following abandonment has increased by 35%.

By funding similar programs in Krasnoyarsk region, the local government there can expect a significant return on its investment; children who have benefited from early intervention require less medical attention and many can ultimately attend regular schools and live independently, thereby reducing the costs incurred by the government for special education facilities, medical services, institutionalization, and social services. By its own estimate, the city of Khabarovsk now saves up to \$101, 600 per year due to early intervention services. Yet of all these gains, the most important is that children like Sasha now have a better chance of leading fulfilling lives in caring families.



This specially designed chair gives Sasha more opportunities to explore his surroundings.

Upcoming Activities:

Septeber 16-17, Moscow:

Conference: "Keeping Children in Families."

October 1-3, Komsomolsk-na-Amure:

Seminar on foster care for orphaned and abandoned children.

October 6-8, Tambov: Seminar on foster care for orphaned and abandoned children.



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